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SUICIDE SQUAD
OSTRANDER
YALE
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CAMPANELLA
SQUAD QUEST!

LEGERDEMAIN

PART TWO: DANGEROUS GAMES

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GEOF ISHERWOOD: PENCILLER
ROBERT CAMPANELLA: INKER
TODD KLEIN: LETTERER
TOM McCRAW: COLORIST
DAN RASPLER: EDITOR

BLOOD ISLAND, CHESAPEAKE BAY, MARYLAND.

READY.

WAIT FOR THE SIGNAL.

TOKU

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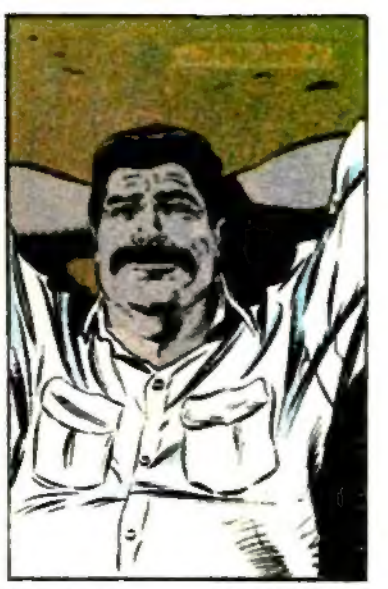
TETRAGRAMMATON! ADNI! EHEIEH! AGLA! LET BRIAH, THE WATER, KNOW THE KISS OF YETZIRAH, THE AIR! LET VAPORS ARISE!

<GO NOW.>

CLEVER. THE ZIONIST MAGICIAN IS SENDING IN A FOG COVER. I CAN NO LONGER SEE THEM.
WHAT COVERS THEM COVERS YOU. SIGNAL THE BADS AND GET GOING. I'LL COMMUNICATE WITH PISCATOR.
LET THE HAYOTH TAKE MARLO; THEN YOU TAKE MARLO FROM THE HAYOTH.

BOY, THIS FOG GOT THICK ALL OF A SUDDEN! I CAN'T SEE A DURN THING!
DON'T WORRY, SOLDIER.

I CAN SEE JUST FINE.
MP



I'M IN POSITION. I CAN SEE THE HAYOTH MAGICIAN--RAMBAN. I COULD KILL HIM EASILY NOW.

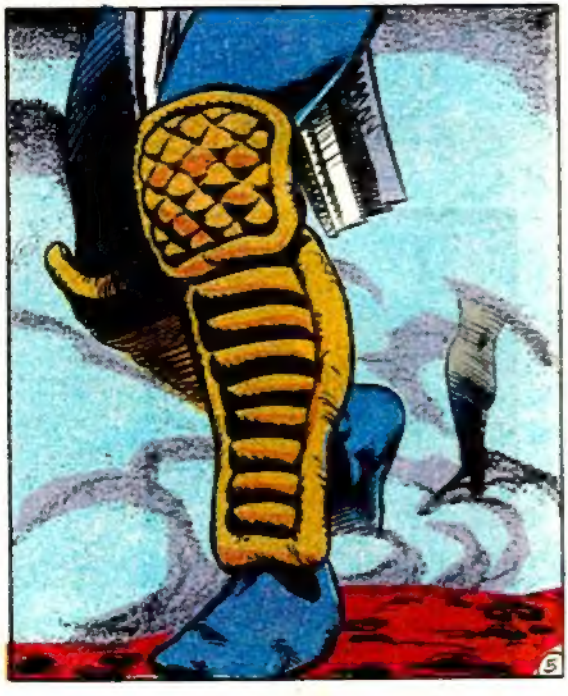
YOU WILL WAIT, PISCATOR. AS YOU WERE TOLD. UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO OTHERWISE.
I WILL.... WAIT.

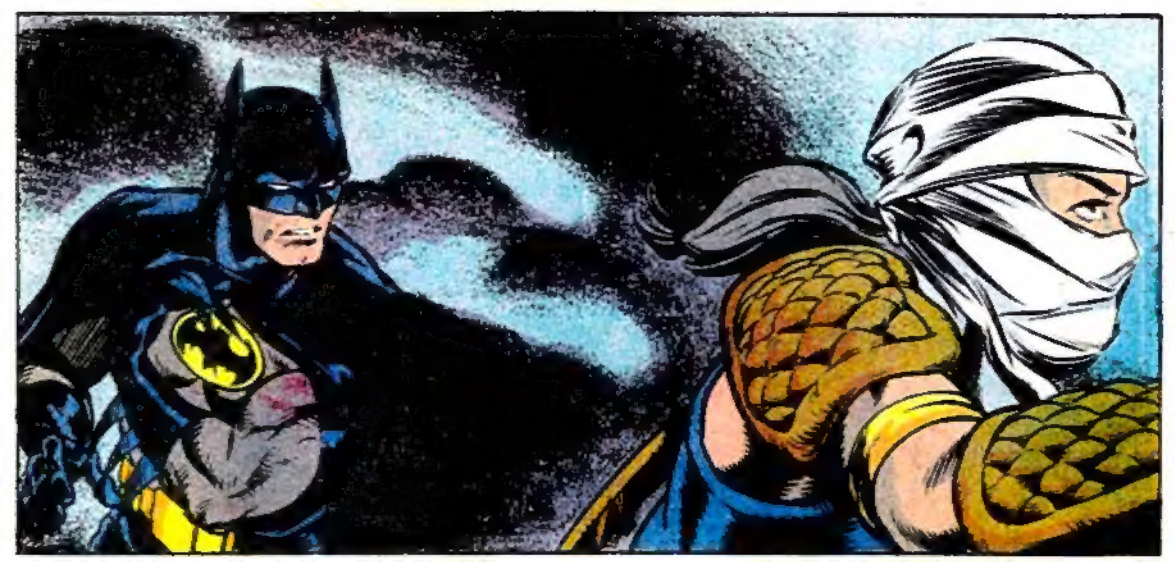
A SIDE GATE...
WAAAA-AHEUH-AHEUH!
WHAT THE HECK IS THIS?
WAAA-HC-WAAA!
LITTLE GIRL, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? HOW'D YOU GET HERE?
I WAS WITH ME MUM AND PA AN' WE WAS IN THE SAILBOAT AN' ALL WITH ME LI'L BROTHER AN' WE CRASHED INTA SOME ROCKS AN'... AN'... AN'...!
AN' I'M THINKING IT WOULD BE FUN TO PEEL YUR MIND!

AH, SO IT'S DEATH BY SUFFOCATIN' YE FEAR MOST, IS IT? AN' ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU'RE EXPERIENCIN' NOW?
'AT'S FUNNY, MISTER! AIR ALL ABOUT YA AND YOU CAN NO TAKE A BREATH. CAN YE?

FUMP

HULLO. BADB HERE. I GOT TH' DOORWAY. IT WAS DEAD EASY--AN' FUN BESIDES.
GOOD WORK. MAINTAIN YOUR POSITION AND HOLD THE GATE. WE MAY NEED IT.





YOU ARE NOT BEING VERY HELPFUL ON THIS MATTER, DYBBUK!
IT GRIEVES ME TO DISAPPOINT YOU, COLONEL. HOWEVER, I MUST QUESTION THE ETHICAL BASIS OF WHAT WE ARE DOING. SHOULD WE NOT BE ACTING IN CONCERT WITH OUR AMERICAN ALLIES?

OUR AMERICAN COUSINS MAY HAVE SUPPLIED MARLO WITH THE DATA HE NEEDED TO CREATE HIS JIHAD. IS THIS A FRIENDLY ACT? TO FOSTER META-HUMAN TERRORISTS ON OUR DOORSTEP?
AND NOW WE HEAR OTHERS--SUCH AS THE SUICIDE SQUAD--ARE OUT TO KIDNAP OR SILENCE MARLO.

NO. MUCH BETTER WE HOLD MARLO.
I KNOW YOU ARE EXPLORING NEW ETHICAL PARAMETERS, DYBBUK, BUT I PROMISE YOU--YOU WILL EITHER START AIDING THE HAYOTH AGAIN OR I WILL PURGE YOUR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE OF ITS ARTIFICIAL PERSONALITY AND START ALL OVER AGAIN!

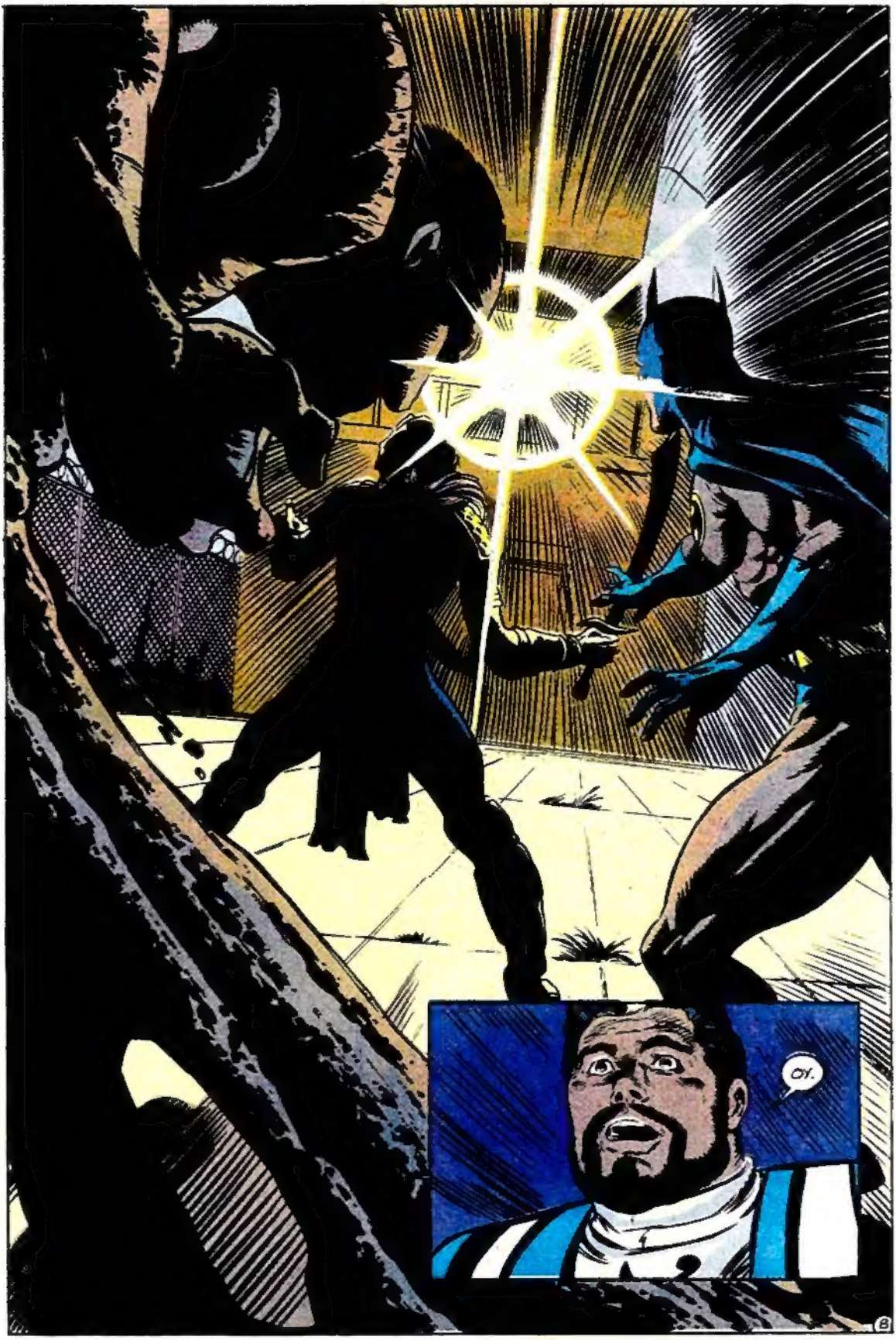
WHEN I GIVE THE SIGNAL, HIT THE SPOTLIGHTS, OKAY?
UH...OKAY, BUT IT WON'T DO MUCH GOOD IN THIS FOG, SUPERMAN.

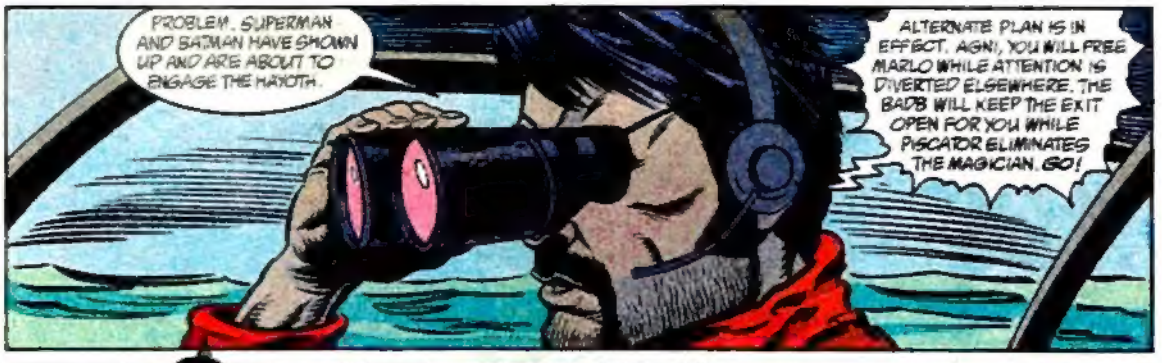
THE FOG IS ABOUT TO LIFT.
MP

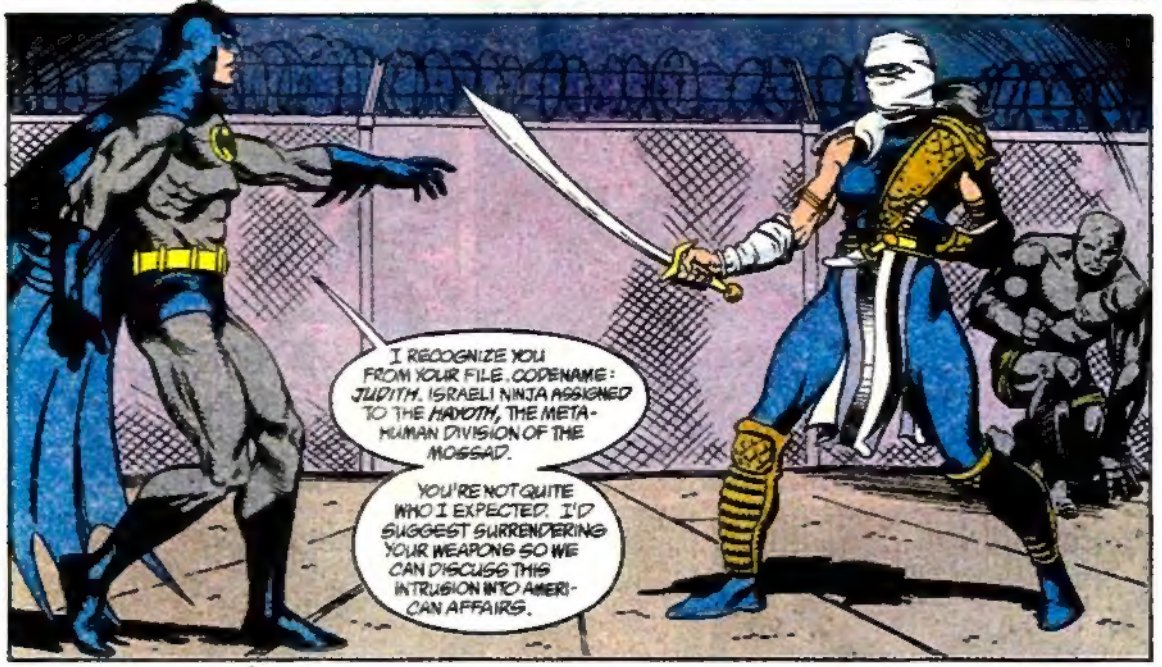
WHOOO

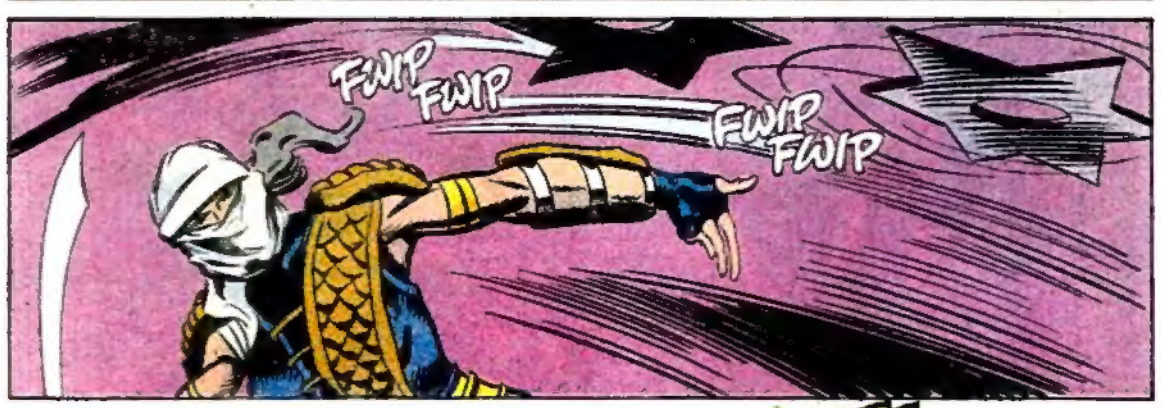
WHOOOOO
WHOOOOOOO

NOW, HIT THE LIGHTS.

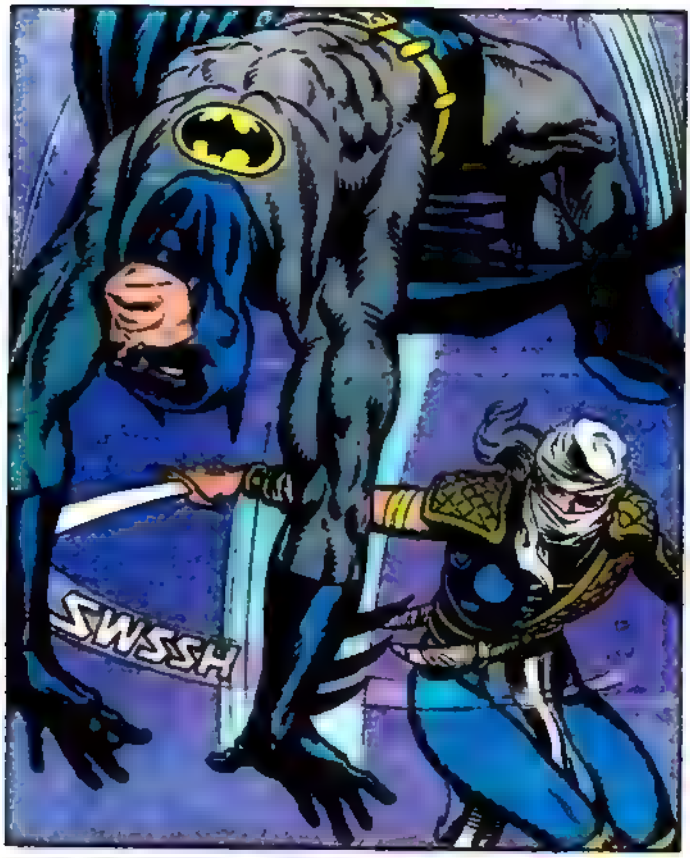

OY.


PROBLEM. SUPERMAN AND BATMAN HAVE SHOWN UP AND ARE ABOUT TO ENGAGE THE HAYOTH.
ALTERNATE PLAN IS IN EFFECT. AGNI, YOU WILL FREE MARLO WHILE ATTENTION IS DIVERTED ELSEWHERE. THE BADB WILL KEEP THE EXIT OPEN FOR YOU WHILE PISCATOR ELIMINATES THE MAGICIAN. GO!

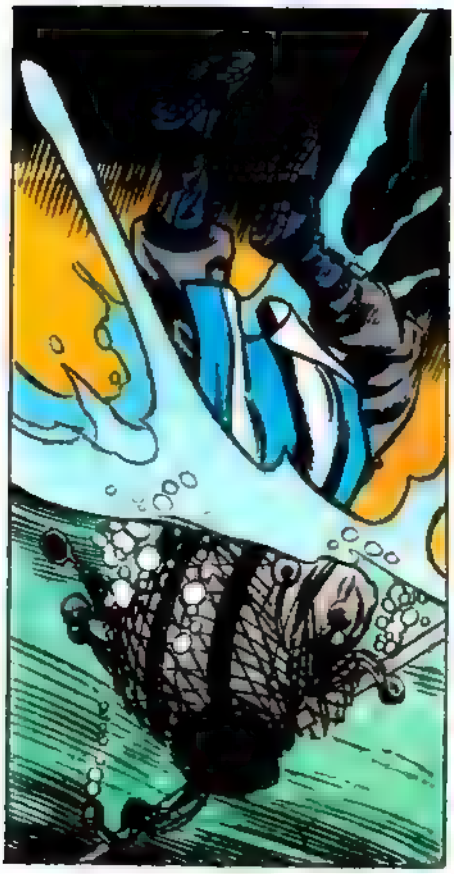

I RECOGNIZE YOU FROM YOUR FILE. CODENAME: JUDITH. ISRAELI NINJA ASSIGNED TO THE HAYOTH, THE META-HUMAN DIVISION OF THE MOSSAD.
YOU'RE NOT QUITE WHO I EXPECTED. I'D SUGGEST SURRENDERING YOUR WEAPONS SO WE CAN DISCUSS THIS INTRUSION INTO AMERICAN AFFAIRS.


FWIP FWIP
FWIP FWIP

KRASH!


SWSSH

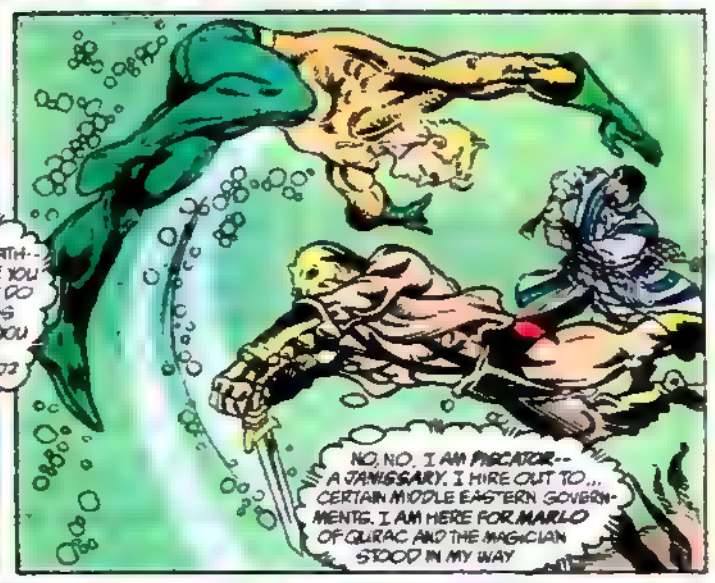
SOMETHING IS SERIOUSLY AMISS...

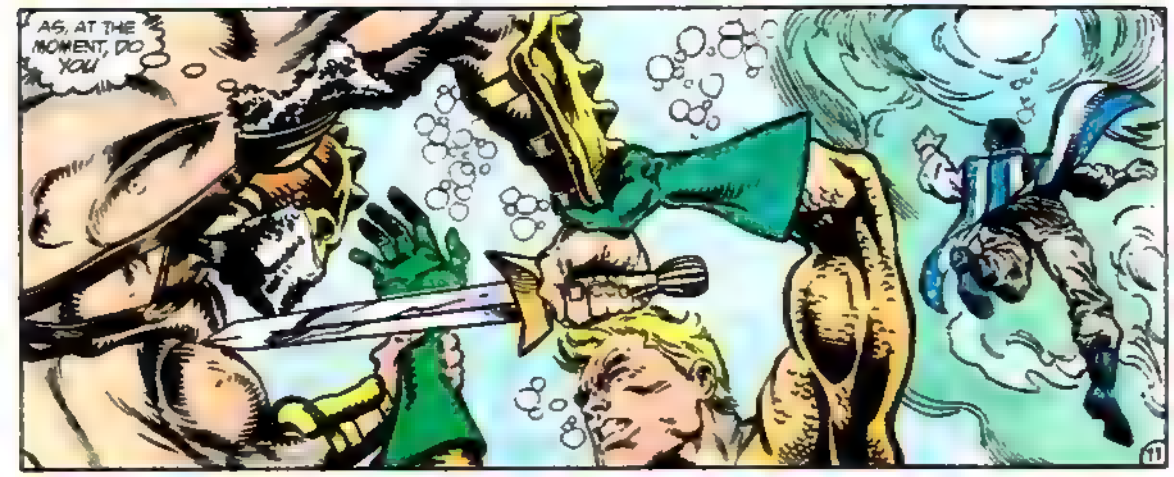


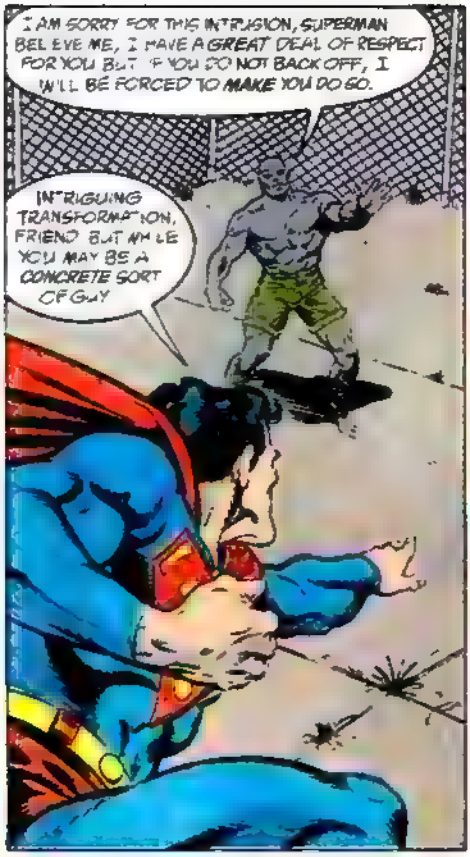
YOU'LL SPEAK NO SPELL DOWN HERE, MAGICIAN!

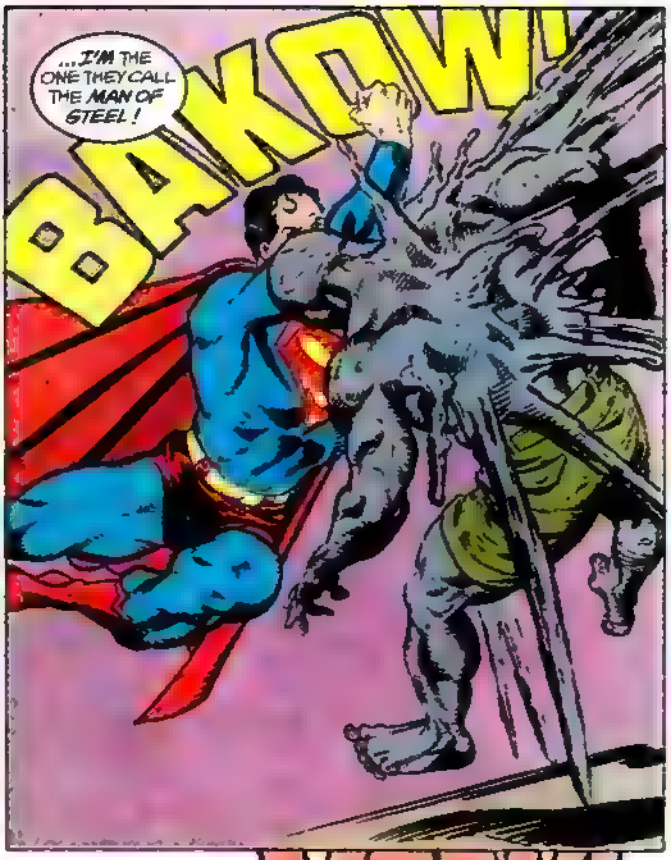
HE WON'T NEED TO.

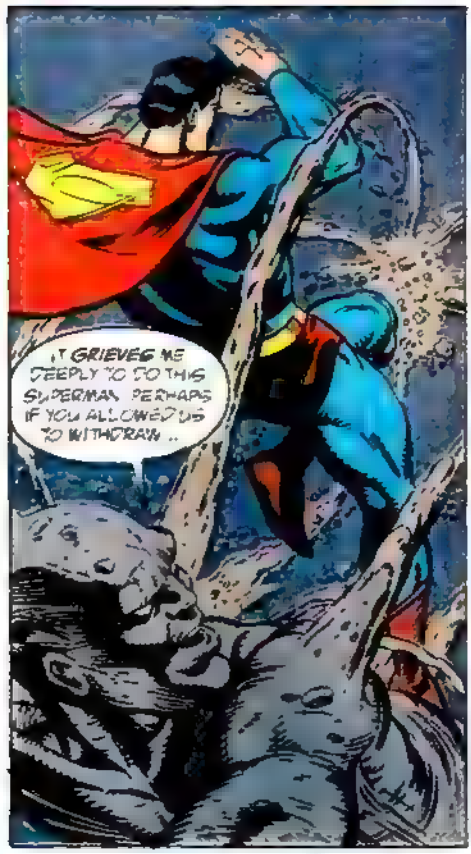
AH! SEA KING! I SALUTE YOU! YOU ARE A FOE WORTHY OF MY STEEL!
I TAKE IT YOU'RE A TELEPATH--WHATEVER ELSE YOU ARE. WHAT PART DO YOU HAVE IN THIS ASSAULT? ARE YOU PART OF THE SUICIDE SQUAD?


NO, NO. I AM PIRCATOR--A JANISSARY. I HIRE OUT TO... CERTAIN MIDDLE EASTERN GOVERNMENTS. I AM HERE FOR MARLO OF QURAC AND THE MAGICIAN STOOD IN MY WAY


AS, AT THE MOMENT, DO YOU!


I AM SORRY FOR THIS INTRUSION, SUPERMAN. BELIEVE ME, I HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF RESPECT FOR YOU BUT IF YOU DO NOT BACK OFF, I WILL BE FORCED TO MAKE YOU DO SO.
INTRIGUING TRANSFORMATION, FRIEND. BUT AM I LE YOU MAY BE A CONCRETE SORT OF GUY


...I'M THE ONE THEY CALL THE MAN OF STEEL!
BAKOW!


IT GRIEVES ME DEEPLY TO DO THIS SUPERMAN. PERHAPS IF YOU ALLOWED US TO WITHDRAW ..

KROK!
...BUT THEN YOU WOULDN'T BE THE HERO YOU ARE IF YOU DID, WOULD YOU?

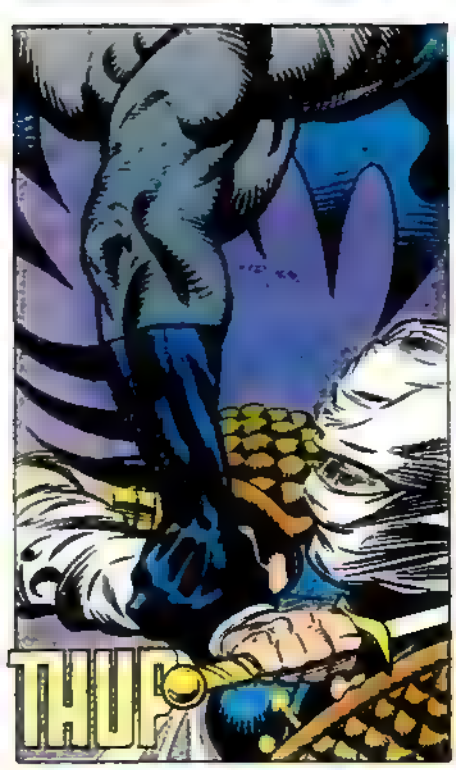
AHOOGA! AHOOGA!
<IT BEGINS>
<PLEASE, STAND AWAY FROM THE CELL DOOR, MR. PRESIDENT. THERE HAS BEEN A CHANGE OF PLANS.>
SNAP!
FWOOMP!
FOOM!

WHAROOM!

<THIS WAY, PLEASE, MR PRESIDENT AND THE EDGES OF THE METAL — THEY ARE QUITE HOT >

<THIS WAY, SIR QUICKLY NOW WE NEED TO MAKE GOOD OUR ESCAPE WHILE THE AMERICANS AND ISRAELIS ARE PUMMELING EACH OTHER >

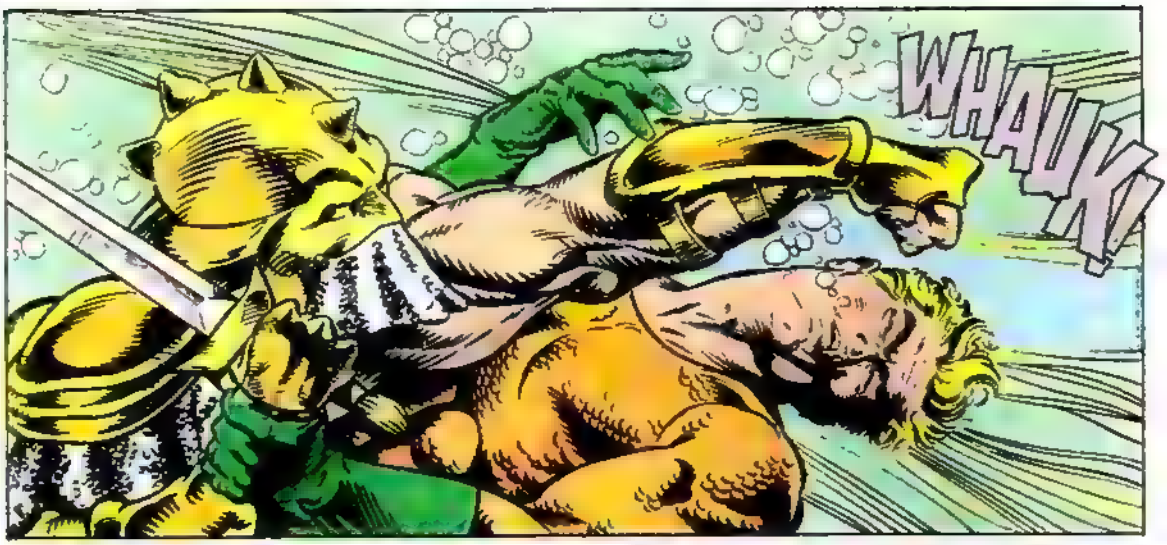
HSSSS!

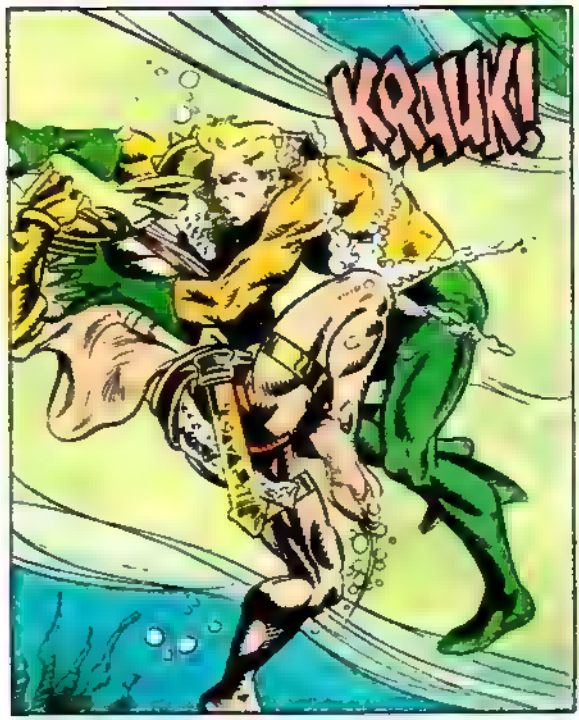

THUP

CHOK!

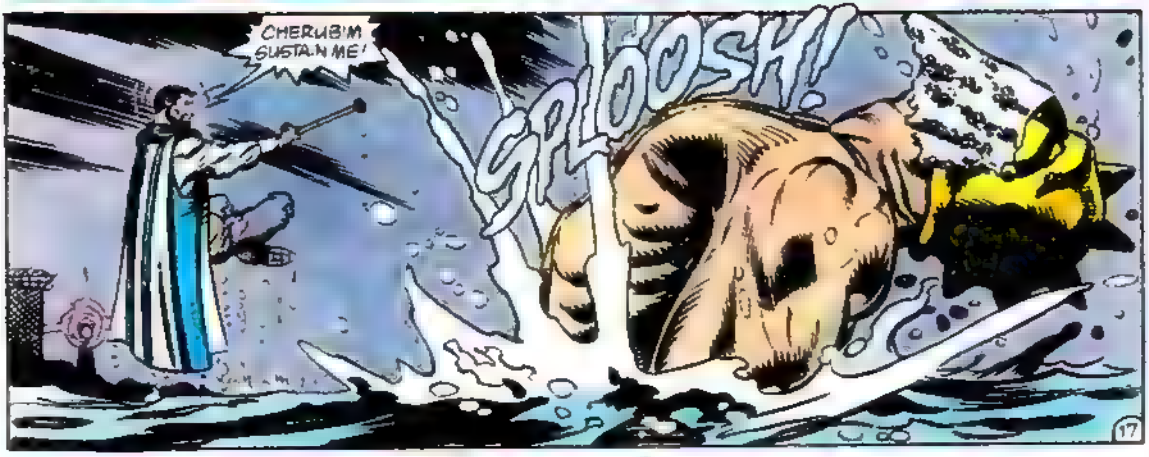
CHUD!

WHUNT!


WHAUK!


KRAUK!

"WE WILL STRIKE QUICKLY," THE COLONEL SAYS! "WE WILL BE IN AND GONE BEFORE THEY HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT HAS HAPPENED," THE COLONEL SAYS!
I HAVE SOME WORDS FOR YOU, COLONEL.


CHERUB'M SUSTA'N ME!
GLOOSH!

HOW ARE THE AMERICANS AND THE ISRAELIS?
IT'S A GREAT LAUGH THEY'RE BETTER THAN THE CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS BACK HOME IN BELFAST IS HE WITH YOU, THEN?

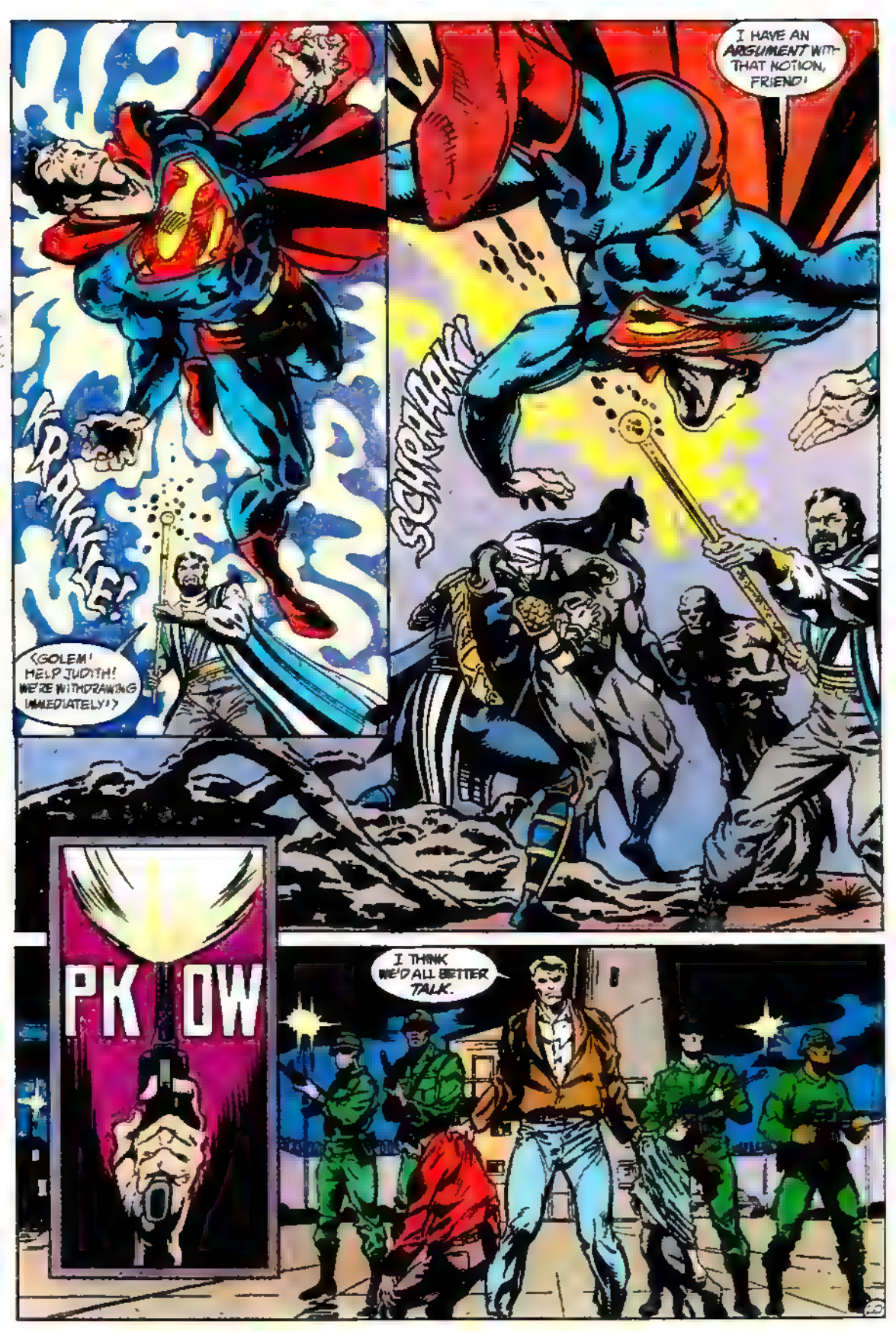
AH, THERE'S HIMSELF WERE YOU AFRAID HE WOULDN'T COME AFTER YOU ... LIKE HE SAID? I BET YOU WERE!
NO

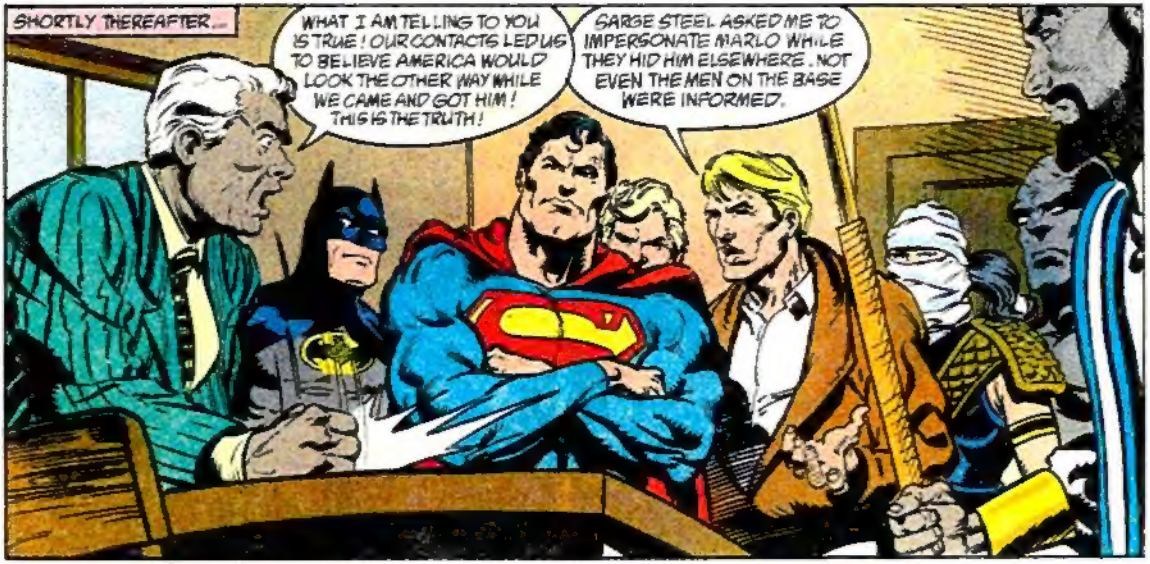
WERE YOU NOT THEN? I CAN SEE, YOU KNOW
HOLD ON! YOU... YOU'RE NOT...!

WHUNT!

WHOK!

PSSSST!
NEMESIS HERE COVER'S BEEN BLOWN--TWO OF THE JIHAD CAME TO "RESCUE" MARLO AND I HAD TO PUT THEM BOTH DOWN
WE HAVE GOT PROBLEMS
KRUNK!


KRAKKE!
<GOLEM! HELP JUDITH! WE'RE WITHDRAWING IMMEDIATELY!>
I HAVE AN ARGUMENT WITH THAT NOTION, FRIEND!
SCHRAAAK!
PK OW
I THINK WE'D ALL BETTER TALK.


SHORTLY THEREAFTER...
WHAT I AM TELLING TO YOU IS TRUE! OUR CONTACTS LED US TO BELIEVE AMERICA WOULD LOOK THE OTHER WAY WHILE WE CAME AND GOT HIM! THIS IS THE TRUTH!
SARGE STEEL ASKED ME TO IMPERSONATE MARLO WHILE THEY HID HIM ELSEWHERE. NOT EVEN THE MEN ON THE BASE WERE INFORMED.

WHERE IS MARLO NOW?
I DON'T KNOW. THEY DIDN'T TELL ME.

BUT HOW IS THIS CONNECTED TO THE DEATH OF RAY PALMER?! WE'RE HERE BECAUSE THE SUICIDE SQUAD ALLEGEDLY KNOWS SOMETHING ABOUT RAY'S DEATH AND THEY WERE SUPPOSEDLY COMING HERE TO DO SOMETHING TO OR FOR MARLO!

SO WHERE'S THE SUICIDE SQUAD?
THAT'S WHAT'S BEEN BOTHERING ME ALL THROUGH THIS! NO SQUAD!
WHERE ARE THEY? WHAT ARE THEY UP TO?

MORE IMPORTANT-- WHAT IS WALLER UP TO?

NEXT: SNAFU--AS ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE SQUAD DIES...!

SUICIDE NOTES

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Funny how the Suicide Squad puts in a surprise guest appearance at the end of their own book, you know?

I bet you were all wondering, "isn't this book called SUICIDE SQUAD for a reason? Like, where the heck are they, man?" Well, they're all on page 22, of course! And next issue, too

Dear Dan,

After reading SUICIDE SQUAD #53-57, I have to say I'm hooked! I've kept my eye on this title since *Legends*, but I never considered picking it up until now.

What I enjoyed most in these issues was the in-depth characterization and how John and Kim were constantly switching scenes to the various operatives and their predicaments.

In regard to Squad members wearing costumes, I feel that some should wear them while others should not. I'm a big fan of the new LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES and their non-costumed approach, but I don't think that you guys have to go all-or-nothing with costumes when it comes to the Squad.

Take Deadshot and Manhunter, for example. Both characters had great costumes, but recent events in their lives no longer required their use. This will only make them more interesting in the long run as they continue to develop (although if you do decide to stick with the costumes, bring back Manhunter's since it's one of my favorites.

I really like the way Barbara Gordon is being portrayed. While losing the use of her legs, she utilizes her most important quality, her intelligence, to show how she is still an important part of the DC Universe. I loved the scene where Vertigo asked her who was in charge since Waller was in the hospital. After taking a moment to take off her glasses and gain her composure, Barbara assertively declares herself as leader. Hmmm. Could this be a bit of foreshadowing, especially now with Amanda recuperating?

I'd also like to address the subject of the new Atom. At first I was furious to find out that the Silver Age forefather was being unnecessarily killed and replaced. I'm now convinced that Ray Palmer is indeed alive and I also find myself starting to like Adam Cray. I've always thought that the Atom would be perfect for the Squad, and now Cray is helping the team in all the ways that Ray Palmer could.

I'm looking forward to the upcoming storyline where Batman, Superman and Aquaman go looking for some answers concerning Ray Palmer. It's about time someone at DC started recognizing the ties the originals should still share, and I'm not surprised that it took John and Kim to do it.

As far as the next issue goes, I'm interested in how Black Adam will be incorporated into the story. I've been waiting a long time for him and Captain Marvel to get back into the DC Universe. I hope this time it's for good.

Well, you guys have got yourselves a new regular reader. I'm expecting good things from you all. With John and Kim supplying the writing and Geof and Rob providing some great art (sorry, you two, I had meant to heap you with praise, but I forgot), I'm sure you'll have no trouble keeping me.

Hasta,
Ronnie B.
Austin, TX

Ronnie, Ronnie, Ronnie. Why'd you wait so long to start buying us, buddy? You only missed about FIVE YEARS *of awesome stories, characters, and art!*

I shouldn't complain. At least you're aboard for "Legerdemain," which I think is one of this series' best story arcs. What do you think of it so far?

* * * * *

Dear Squad Scribes,

You did a fine job on issue #57, a good climax to the "Dragon's Hoard." My only complaint is that Lawton destroyed the guns too easily, but that's a bit of nit-picking on my part, and I'll end it right there.

The action sequences in this issue were tremendous, coming at an unrelenting pace and overwhelming the senses. I hated to see Steel Wolf go, but you left him in stylish fashion in the Vietnam jungles. I'm sure he will return (along with the other Red Shadows). One return that was totally unexpected was that of the Enchantress. I really appreciate these little twists and turns John and Kim include in the stories.

The art was fine and I hope Geof and Robert will stay on this title for the foreseeable future. Incidentally, Mr. Raspler, I was surprised by page 21—you had me going there for a moment. Now I suppose we will see Barbara Gordon thrust into the role of Squad leader, which is fine by me. I look forward to the "War of the Gods" story. Take care.

Sincerely,

Scott R. Pyle
502 Giffin Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15210

I agree that the Hoard itself was trashed a little too quickly, Scott, so don't think that you're alone in your nit-picking. And sorry that Barbara didn't get to run the show for the time being. But SUICIDE SQUAD #58 was a crossover issue, and Amanda just couldn't stay in bed!

* * * * *

Dear Dan,

The concluding chapter of "The Dragon's Hoard" was a great improvement on what has gone before. For one thing, there was much more wit from Boomerbutt and Deadshot (who is fast becoming as funny as his Australian colleague). Also, on the subject of Lawton, I think I can finally say that I'm glad he dropped the costume, if only because it allows us to see his facial expressions much more. I was slightly disappointed that Gort didn't find out about Lawton's gun malfunctioning — maybe next time they meet, Lawton can taunt him with it.

Did Ben kill Catseye? I'm not sure I like this new Bronze Tiger. He's too near the edge... time to go boom? The appearance of the Enchantress was a pleasant surprise — perhaps she was just so mad at seeing what had been done to Eve's costume on the cover this month.

Back to Lawton, and I can't say just how much better he is these days! Not only is his sarcastic attitude ("guess I'd better shoot everybody just to be safe") much more preferable to the old strong silent Deadshot, he also now seems a lot more sane. He really took charge toward the end of this mission and saved the day. Boomerang, too, proved his usefulness this month, particularly with his manipulation of Cliff Carmichael. And the split-second timing that prevented Carmichael from frying Digger's brain also made me laugh—John writes good comedy.

All in all, a very enjoyable conclusion—this book is back on top. But the trick with the wrong doctor was a really cheap shot, guys...especially if you read the letters page first (oops). As Digger would say, "Choom off!"

Rock and Roll.

Rol Hirst
(Long Address)
England

Hey, Rol! When are you going to stop reading the letter column before the story? Serves you right, man. Don't read the comments before the comic itself. If you do, more surprises'll just get blown for you. I promise.

* * * * *

Dear Dan,

Well, the "Dragon's Hoard" ended like a typical SUICIDE SQUAD multi-parter. It had a better conclusion than most multiple issue tales in other comics, and part of the story was left open-ended. It worked for me.

Since the story did work for me, and I did enjoy reading every tiny bit of it, I have got to address comments made by the so-called Dr. Dis. I'm surprised you didn't see right through this guy, Dan. He's as transparent as Reynolds Wrap, and as sincere as Tricky Dick. Even though it isn't needed, I will state my opinion. Senseless violence should be left on the streets of L.A. I want "espionage crap" for the Suicide Squad. John and Kim do a great job, so what needs to be changed? We have plenty of guest stars, neat new heroes and villains, and unparalleled character development. This Dr. Dis has invoked my wrath for writing a hypocritical letter just to try to invoke someone's wrath. I am on to you, Doctor—and if you intend to rock the boat, you must also expect to fall out of it. Case closed.

Anyway Dan, when will we get to see Mrs. Gradenko again?

Look to the *Future*.

Sir Jon Johnson
64 Indian Hill Avenue
Portland, CT 06480

For those of you who missed the opening salvo, letter-writer Dr. Dis suggested increased violence and death in SUICIDE SQUAD at the expense of convoluted storylines. Well, Doc? Any responses to what gets said in this issue?

And about the notorious Mrs. Gradenko? No immediate, etc.

* * * * *

Dan and Co.,

Much as it troubles me to differ with Dr. Dis's position, SUICIDE SQUAD #57 was an excellent culmination of a gripping espionage scenario. Exploding temples, poison claw touches, off-panel Boomerang torture; how much mindless violence do you want?

I think the Doctor's trouble is that he equates lack of death with lack of danger. In *The A-Team* TV show, thousands of rounds go off and no one is hit. If BA is shot, he just walks funny for the rest of the episode. Many Squadders have died. (See issue #50.) Deadshot, Vertigo, Vixen, and Nightshade all have been injured and *out* for many issues from a single bullet or shuriken. The Squad no longer pulls from an infinite reserve of Belle Reve inmates. The point has become to manipulate the odds. Not easy for our heroes, but the fun of the story is to see them use their brains. Lawton beat Gort with a *broken* laser.

Comics with this clever "espionage crap" are few and far between. I read SUICIDE SQUAD for cloak and dagger violence, not pure bloodshed. On the other hand, Carmichael's never been hurt, and fatal mindless violence might improve him (hint, hint).

On to other things. You had me with Amanda's death, but I was actually excited by the idea. Amanda croaks, and the Suicide Squad continues under the leadership of...Barbara Gordon? She's just not the type right now, and it would take some *nasty* experiences to dissuade her or bring her to the hardboiled level necessary to survive. It would be interesting to see, although probably fatal for a few of my favorites.

Speaking of which, thanks for Cray's underconfidence. It gives him that "all-too-human" quality that makes me root for him. Loved seeing Shaw and hope he sticks around. The off-stage bit with Harkness and Carmichael was great, but get rid of Carmichael. He is vaguely useful, but more of a danger than an aid. Along the "get rid of" line: GET RID OF ENCHANTRESS! She is vain, boastful, but worst of all, boring (I was expecting her). She's not a threat, she's a load of hot air. Exorcise her, eh?

Thanks again for the "espionage crap."

John Ward
(Address witheld)

And thanks for taking the time to write, John.

* * * * *

Dear Creators,

Issue #57 of the SQUAD was a perfect ending to the "Dragon's Hoard" saga. The fight scenes were especially well-paced, and make the book particularly exciting to read. The artwork is really shaping up nicely as Isherwood and Campanella's styles begin to assimilate with each other. Overall, this issue was top-notch.

As for Dr. Dis's comments, I have to say that I disagree with the idea that a member of the Squad should die each mission. This formula would take away a lot of excitement from the book, as all the readers would expect a death and probably guess as to the identity of the unlucky one. I'm not against members dying, I just don't think it should happen too often. Death should be something unpredictable and unexpected so as to increase its effectiveness. As for violence vs. espionage, I think the Squad benefits from a healthy blend of both. No issue should have one without the other.

Thanks.

Danny Budge
726 Prevost, St-Bruno
Quebec, J3V-3E1
CANADA

Thanks for writing, Danny.

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